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# 'Soviet Military Power': basis for Pentagon charges

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Pentagon officials have long insisted that it is Soviet actions that make arms talks difficult, and research into space-based defense imperative.

They repeated those accusations this week, with new charts and photos, and perhaps a particular audience in mind: Congress, which has begun pondering specific cuts in the defense budget.

The vehicle for the Pentagon's intensified accusations was the fourth edition of "Soviet Military Power," a slick red volume full of details about the organization, weaponry, and readiness of USSR armed forces. The book, released April 2, focuses this year on the Kremlin's own push into space weaponry and defenses, and portrays the USSR as an arms control cheater intent on stirring up trouble around the world.

According to the report:

• The Soviets are ahead of the US in developing laser weapons, which could be used to shoot down satellites or missiles. Soviet antimissile lasers could be a reality before 1990, says the report. US officials charge that early prototypes have already interfered with US reconnaissance efforts.

• The USSR is working on an antiballistic missile (ABM) system, which could be rapidly deployed to protect important targets. To back up this claim, the Pentagon report points to various radars now under construction, and new interceptor missiles being developed to defend Moscow. Deployment of such a wide-ranging system would violate the 1972 ABM Treaty.

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• An even newer Soviet ICBM, as yet unnamed by Western military intelligence, is already being tested, says "Soviet Military Power."

• A Soviet space shuttle has had airborne tests on



USSR's Delta IV missile sub

the back of bombers. This space shuttle, notes the Pentagon report, is a dead ringer for the US version.

• The Soviet submarine force continues to rapidly expand in size. A third huge TYPHOON-class ballistic missile sub has been launched, as has the first unit of a completely new AKULA class of attack submarine. Overall, the USSR is testing nine new types of submarines, says the study. (Some of these may be variations on older models.)

These annual studies of USSR military power have become increasingly elaborate since they first were published in 1981.

Full of intelligence photos and artists' renditions of Soviet weapons, their detail is generally accurate, critics say, but sometimes misleading. While there is some comparison to US and NATO forces, for instance, the book doesn't give a true picture of the East-West military balance, say these critics.

Some of the Soviet's nine new sub classes under development, for instance, are diesel powered, notes Thomas Longstreth, research director of the Arms Control Association. The US hasn't built a new diesel sub for decades, he says. And the ABM system around Moscow is being "modernized" with technology the US had in the '60s, says Mr. Longstreth.

A senior military intelligence official, who briefed reporters on the Pentagon study, admits that he would not swap US forces, gun for gun and missile for missile, with the Soviet equivalent. But this official stresses that the report proves there is an imbalance between what the Soviets say we must do to stop the arms spiral, and their own performance.

In this light such Soviet rhetoric as that directed against US research into space-based weapons systems is clearly self-serving, since they are conducting the same research, says Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger. "They clearly want a monopoly in this field," he said at a press conference Tuesday.

This whole exercise likely has two specific targets: Congress, where this week key Senators are beginning to draw up defense budget cuts, and Geneva, where US and USSR negotiators have just begun wide-ranging arms talks.

Subcommittees of the Senate Armed Services Committee have for days been deliberating in closed sessions about the specifics of the military budget. One such committee reportedly has voted to slice President Reagan's fiscal 1986 request for

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MX missiles from 48 to 21 units. Money for space-based defense research would be cut by \$150 to \$750 million under various alternatives proposed by a subcommittee.

Defense Secretary Weinberger also hopes that "Soviet Military Power" will help coax European allies into solidly backing space defense research. Last week, he formally invited US allies to participate in the research, giving them 60 days to reply.

Appearing with Weinberger at the press conference, however, West German Defense Minister Manfred Wörner said "we still have to define fields of interest for ourselves and our industry."